

A

REVIEW

OF THE

STATE

OF THE

BRITISH NATION.

Tuesday, November 8. 1709.

THE Enemies of this Paper would fain raise a popular Clamour against it, as a Paper calculated for Opposition to the *Church of England*; and by how much their Arguments for this are weaker, by so much the Noise they make is loud; for Clamour and Railery were always made use of as Equivalents to Reason and Sound-arguing; how well they supply the Place, shall be found in the Sequel.— I have often express'd my self with a great Deal of Plainness and Sincerity on this Head, *in the like Case*, and I shall do so now again, by Way of Caution to those that take up too hastily with a railing Accusation.— And I am perswaded, I shall fully satisfy all sober, moderate, and serious *Church men*; for the rest, I count their Censure *FAAME*.

I own and acknowledge the Church of *England* to be a Protestant Reform'd Church, pure in Doctrine, and Orthodox in Profession: However, I may differ from her in Church-Government and Ceremonies, which, GOD be prais'd, are Points but Circumstantial, and not altogether Essential, or Doctrinal.— As *England* is establish'd, I am fully satisfy'd the Civil Administration should be in the Church of *England*—and firmly believe, it is Best for Us, most our Interest, and most conducing to the publick Peace, that it should be so.— The *Dissenters* being so divided from one another in Affection, as well as Interest, that they would never agree to concede the Crown to either of them.

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The Church of *England* has upon several Occasions shewn her self a firm Bulwark against Popery, as well at her first Reformation, as on several Occasions since, and particularly at the Revolution—Nor are the Interests of either compatible with each other, or their Doctrine at all consistent.

Yet, for Reasons which I cannot give here, I find it impossible, with Ease to my Conscience, for me to conform to or comply with either the Worship, Discipline, or Government of this Church—or to communicate with her, whether in a stated or an Occasional Communion.

I farther declare, that if I could conform to her, I *ought*—and indeed *would*—and think it *would* be my Duty so to do—And I cannot but own, I detest and abhor, as Unlawful, Irrational, and Unchristian, the subjecting the Sacred Institutions of Christ Jesus, I mean, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as a Qualification—and taking that Sacrament merely as a Test of Qualification for Preferment and secular Employment—Nor have I ever seen an Attempt of any Consequence to defend it.

At the same time, I neither say nor believe the Church of *England* to be a completely reform'd Church—But that many Things remain yet to be reform'd, and which among the Dissenting Churches are (tho' not there either perfectly) farther reform'd—And for this Reason I DISSENT; believing every Christian to be oblig'd to worship GOD in that Manner or Form, as he finds most agreeable to the Will of GOD declar'd in the Scriptures, and to joy in Communion with those that HE THINKS do so—And upon these Reasons I SEPARATE.

After all, my dissenting and separating, no way lessens my Charity to, or Reverence for those, who in the Honesty of their Hearts, and with simple uncorrupted Aims, adhere to the Dictates of their Consciences, and joy with the Church of *England*—The Reverend Clergy, whether dignify'd or inferior, such of them as pursue the Glorious and Sacred Office of Ministers of Christ, and walk as Lights in the World, sound in Doctrine, and exemplar in Conversation, I preserve for them a profound

Veneration, and a sincere Respect—And tho' I do not equally honour the Disparity they profess, yet it no way hinders me from giving a due Deference to their Characters—Nor have I ever been guilty of the least Disrespect to such, but count it my Honour that I have Acquaintance with, and Esteem from many of the Church of *England* Clergy, who merit the Character above, and who are Part of that happy FBW who support that Church.

These Reverend and Holy Persons are never failing to be accompany'd with this one Qualification, (*viz.*) That they lament the Decay of Discipline in the Church of *England*, and the Neglect of putting in Execution those wholesome Laws—which by her own Canon would purge the House of GOD, and remove flagrant Scandal from the Altar—And I freely appeal to all the Reverend Clergy of the Church of *England*, who have any Zeal for GOD, true Affection for their Mother the Church, or Pity for the Souls of their Hearers—Whether the present Immoralities of the Clergy in this Nation, are not the greatest Reproach imaginable to the Governors of the Church—as entirely neglecting that Discipline, which alone can restore the Honour and Esteem of the Church—Whether the scandalous Lives of the Clergy are not the great Bacrifice of *Dissenters*, and whether they can blame the poor People for running to Meeting-Houses, while the Ignorance, Negligence, or Impiety of their Parochial Instructor, renders him abominable, and the People are made to abhor the Offering of the Lord?

These are the Things that I have declar'd against, and these I shall never cease to pursue; nor shall all the Clamour of a Party, that espouse these Agents of Hell, be able to silence these Complaints, by any thing, but reforming the Practice—Whenever this is done, it shall soon appear, that I pursue the Crimes, not the Persons, the Vices, not the Men—and that it is far from an Attack upon the Church—The only way to preserve which, is to root out Scandal and Vice from the Pillars that support her—The Vices of the Clergy undermine the very

very Foundation of the Church, and must in Time overwhelm her, if not carefully search'd into.— I touch but here and there, to give black Instances of the Thing, that it may awaken the faithful Watchmen to give a more effectual Warning.— But with abundant Respect, give me leave to say, even to the Fathers and Governors of the Church of *England*—If some speedy Course be not taken to extinguish this Fire, if some *Phineas* be not found, whose Zeal for God's Glory shall be a Terror to these abominable People.—The Fire is kindled, the Plague is begun, that will consume and eat out the Vitals of true Religion from the Church of *England*, and she will at last be bury'd in the Ruins of her own Establishment.—For the Church of GOD can never stand upon the Foundations of Sin.

If this Plainness must be taken for Enmity to the Church—I say, it is Mis-taken. The Council is good, the Argument is sound, and believe it or no, hearken to it or no, hear or forbear, throw Dirt at the Author of it as long as you please—it shall rise in Judgment against this Generation, if it be neglected, when the Ruin of their Church shall be charg'd upon the Neglect of the Watchmen of *Jerusalem*. Nor can it be ill design'd, for it is started in its Season, in the Time for putting it in Practice.—You cannot say that it is done, when it is too late to remedy it, and so done only to upbraid you.

No, no, most Reverend, and Right Reverend Fathers—If you please to be Fathers, and act the Fathers of the Church, for the Glory of GOD, and for the Recovering the Church of *England* from the DANGER she is in, of immediate Destruction.—Ye must set about a strict, an exact, an impartial Visitation—and root-out Vice, Immorality, and Debauchery from the Clergy.—It is not too late.—Heaven summons you to the Work, by the general Complaint of the whole Nation.—Drunkenness, Oaths, and abominable Lewdness, Ignorance, Negligence, and scandalous Insufficiency, and to make it still worse, abhor'd Error, Deism, and Socinianism, have over-run the Clergy of the Church; and the Examples are innumerable.

If ye will please to restore Discipline, to revive the Ecclesiastick Censures—

If every Bishop will be pleas'd to acquaint himself with his Clergy, and discountenance, reprove, and chastise Vice among them, and in Case of incorrigible Practice, impartially correct: I need not say, what a glorious Change this would make in the Church of *England*—But particularly, my Lords, pardon me for saying it would do more, much more to lessening the Number of Dissenters, and weakening the Interest of the *SCHISM*, as some call it, than all the Clamours and Cabals, that we are told are now forming against the Toleration, are ever likely to do.

And let me but desire those Gentlemen that value a Reform'd Church, and know any thing of Discipline, but look into *Scotland*; no matter what the *Presbyterian* Church is in Principle, I am not speaking of that here, it will speak for itself; But will ye be pleas'd to view the Effect of her Discipline?—Not the least Immorality, no Appearance of Vice, no Scandal in Conversation is to be found among her whole Clergy; the worst Enemy of her Constitution will allow her Ministers are sober, grave, moral, and free from Scandal.

If any thing contrary happens, for Ministers are but Men there, as well as elsewhere.—This immediately follows, they are certainly and infallibly prosecuted, censur'd, reprov'd, and as the Crime merits, depos'd and depriv'd.—And this preserves the Church of *Scotland*, and only this can preserve the Church of *England*.—Here's her Danger! And till you look here, you will never deliver her; for if this be not remedy'd, it will SAPP the Basis of her Establishment, and overthrow the whole Building.

Whenever this Work is seriously set about, this Paper shall joyfully recognize the Zeal of the Undertakers.—and soon convince you all, that it is the Reformation, not the Destruction of the Church, that is the End of its meddling with these Things.—But if this be still omitted, this Paper shall never fail to lay before you the flagrant Crimes of a dissolute Clergy, in order to expose the Vices, and warn the People—

People— And I believe, all wise Men will allow it to be a Work, that is both just and necessary, lawful and expedient.

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TO a modern Author, who is falling upon the Toleration of *Dissenters* in *England*; and giving a History of their Toleration, I thought fit to give a Hint or two; if he pleases to observe it, he may.

1. *He says*, pag. 40. *King Charles II. in 1672, granted the Dissenters an Ample Toleration.*

I desire he will answer a Query or two, if he thinks fit, upon that Head.

1. *How could the King grant an Ample Toleration—against express Laws?*

2. *Was not that Declaration an Experiment of the dispensing Power?*

3. *Was it not voted Illegal in the next Parliament? — And Alderman Love, to the Eternal Honour of his Memory, the first Man in the House, (tho' a Dissenter) that mov'd against it—Declaring, the Dissenters would not accept of their private Liberty upon such Terms, and at the Expence of an Invasion upon the general Liberties of the Nation—Whereupon the King was oblig'd to recall his illegal Grant—and refusing a Parliamentary Toleration, the Dissenters fell under a third Persecution in that Reign.*

I find this Writer is no less partial and unfair in his Notions of *King James's* Toleration, which I shall speak to hereafter—Mean time these People seem to concert their Matters very ill, that they should fly thus boldly at the Toleration in *England*, at the same time they are soliciting very hard for a Toleration in *Scotland*.

And *Lastly*, I cannot but remind them, That her Majesty has declar'd her Resolution of preserving the Toleration INVIO-
LABLE—And our QUEEN has never yet broke her Word with her People;
Let them lay up that in their Hearts.

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